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Listen: NASA Project Transforms Telescope Data on Milky Way Into Sounds
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

A new sonification project led by NASA's Chandra X-ray Center has provided space enthusiasts with the opportunity to hear a portion of the center of the Milky Way and the remains of the supernova Cassiopeia, among other galactic jewels.

The project tapped a variety of x-ray, optical and infrared images collected through the Chandra X-ray Observatory, the Hubble Space Telescope and the Spitzer Space Telescope, and saw agency scientists examine a 400-light-year span of the Milky Way's Galactic Center.

The joint effort ultimately translated the collected data into sound in a move to offer a new take on the cosmos. Officials are offering users the options to either listen to the work as an ensemble or as solos.

A [Tuesday release from NASA](#) states that the sounds represent both the position and the brightness of a celestial object in an image, with sources seen at the top of the photo heard as higher pitches, while the volume rises with the intensity of the light being emitted.

The crescendo of the ensemble occurs when the marker reaches the bright, lower-right portion of the image, which depicts Sagittarius A* - a bright, complex radio source that is home to a supermassive black hole.

"Each image reveals different phenomena happening in this region about 26,000 light-years from Earth," the release notes. "The Hubble image outlines energetic regions where stars are being born, while Spitzer's infrared image shows glowing clouds of dust containing complex structures."

"X-rays from Chandra reveal gas heated to millions of degrees from stellar explosions and outflows from Sagittarius A*," the release adds.

However, in addition to the focus on the Galactic Center, the project also provides viewers with the chance to listen to both the supernova remnant Cassiopeia A and the Pillars of Creation, an active star-forming section of the Eagle Nebula.

The Chandra X-ray team [noted in its description of the project](#) that the sonification of Cassiopeia A is "mapped to four elements found in the debris from the exploded star as well as other high-energy data." Similar to the process used for the ensemble, the intensity of the light sources is represented by the volume heard.

The same pitch-changing scheme as used for the Galactic Center was also replicated for the sonification of the Pillars of Creation; however, specific attention was given to the pillars, which are heard as "sweep from low to high pitches."

The NASA project is part of ongoing work being carried out by the US space agency's [Universe of Learning program](#).

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'Moving Goalposts': Senate Probe of Biden-Burisma Corruption Disproved Claims Nobody Made - Analyst
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

On Wednesday, a hotly anticipated probe by Senate Republicans into corruption allegations against Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden and his son, Hunter, reported no evidence of wrongdoing. However, one analyst told Sputnik that investigators arrived at this conclusion by "moving the goalposts.

The white-hot core of the [impeachment of US President Donald Trump last December](#) was his pushing the Ukrainian president to investigate the Bidens' potentially corrupt behavior. Hunter Biden had become a board member of natural gas company Burisma Holdings, which does business in Ukraine, in the aftermath of the 2014 coup d'etat against Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, which was heavily supported by the United States.

Joe Biden was US vice president at the time of these events, and no probe of the situation had yet been completed when Trump spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last spring.

However, [the Senate's investigation admitted that Hunter had "cashed in"](#) on his father's name during business negotiations and even found that his work at Burisma gave the appearance of a conflict of interest and had caught the eye of higher-ups in the administration of US President Barack Obama. [Despite this, the report concluded there had been no corruption](#) because there was no evidence that Vice President Biden had shaped US foreign policy to support his son's ambitions.

Journalist and political analyst Caleb Maupin told [Radio Sputnik's Political Misfits](#) on Wednesday that the report's findings were "moving the goalposts" to disprove claims no one has made.

"The whole thing, if you look at it, just reeks of corruption," Maupin told hosts Michelle Witte and Bob Schlehuber. "I think this is a benefit that Joe Biden's son got out of" the 2014 US-backed coup in Ukraine, "and I think that if he were not Joe Biden's son, he wouldn't have gotten that position."

"At the same time that the United States is involved in destabilizing Ukraine and toppling the government - you know about the Euromaidan event: billions of dollars from US NGOs sent to foment chaos in the streets and bring down the government of Yanukovich. You have [the phone call leaked where it appears \[then-Assistant Secretary of State\] Victoria Nuland](#) is almost selecting who becomes the new leader."

"Amid all these events where the United States is meddling in Ukraine's affairs, destabilizing the country, toppling the elected leader, putting in the government a lot of far-right-wing groups and ultra-nationalists involved in that ... amid all of these events, somehow, the son of the vice president just ends up getting into the natural gas business with Burisma Holdings," Maupin said, noting Hunter had no previous experience in the gas business.

"Now, that's suspicious, and that's a reason for people to look into this and say something's not right here. Now, did it influence the policy? Do we think that the Obama administration and the whole government did this just so Hunter Biden can get the job? Clearly not, but it looks like some people were scratching each other's backs, so to speak," he said. "It doesn't look good." "If something like this were going on with a Trump official, I think the Democrats would raise this concern. The fact that Trump raised this concern about what was going on, it's not shocking. These kind of things go on; this is what corruption looks like," he added.

Maupin noted the US has "very specific legal definitions" of corruption that ignore the fact that "money still has huge amounts of influence in politics. It's just that there are legal stipulations about how that money can have influence ... everyone knows that money equals power in American politics, and people aren't happy about it."

However, he parried suggestions that repeating facts like these is part of a Russian disinformation operation, noting that such accusations are thought policing.

"The question is: did this happen or not?" he noted. "This idea that we shouldn't think certain thoughts, 'don't let your mind go in this direction because if you do, that's what the Russians want' - this is totalitarian, McCarthyist thinking. If a story is false, you don't say it's false because it's similar to something somebody you don't like might have said or might have thought. You said it's false because of things in the story that are inaccurate or a train of logic that isn't accurate."

Another fact Maupin noted had actually been raised as a concern that went unaddressed in the Senate report was "when Joe Biden bragged about getting [the prosecutor who was looking into Burisma Holdings fired](#). We know that when Joe Biden was speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations, he bragged about how he prevented the money from going to Ukraine until they fired a certain prosecutor ... so there's a lot of stuff we can ask questions about."

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Photo: Taiwan Has Cruise Missiles Capable of Reaching China Stationed at Base in Straits by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

A recent news report from Taiwan's Makung Air Force Base in the Taiwan Strait revealed Taiwan's air force has stationed air-to-ground cruise missiles within striking distance of the Chinese mainland.

On September 22, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing Wen paid a visit to Makung Air Force Base, a Republic of China Air Force installation on the Penghu archipelago, which sits in the Taiwan Strait. At the highly publicized meeting, she greeted several F-CK-1C/D Indigenous Defense Fighter pilots and thanked them for their "heroic performance" in deterring dozens of Chinese aircraft that crossed the strait's median line over the weekend, [The Drive reported](#).

However, [clips from the meeting aired by Taipei's Formosa TV](#) also showed a display of weapons nearby in the hangar that included several Wan Chien ("ten thousand swords") cruise missiles carried by the air force's F-CK-1C/D fighters. The indigenously-made cruise missile has

a range of 150 miles, [according to a US-based think tank](#), which puts the Chinese mainland, including the metropolis of Xiamen, within striking distance.

Next to the cruise missiles in the display are AGM-84 Harpoon anti-ship missiles, which Taiwanese jets have made a point of carrying on patrols in recent months. The Harpoons are US-made and sold to the Taiwanese government [through a backdoor relationship that Washington uses](#) to keep Taipei independent of Beijing.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has claimed Taiwan, also called the Republic of China, is a wayward province of China since the PRC was formed in 1949 when the Red Army defeated the republican forces in the Chinese Civil War.

Under US President Donald Trump, US support for Taiwan has ballooned, concurrent with growing hostilities between Washington and Beijing on a number of fronts. Two of the US' largest-ever weapons deals with Taiwan have been signed or proposed in the last two years: namely [an \\$8 billion purchase of advanced F-16V "Viper" fighters](#) and [a \\$7 billion weapons sale now being discussed by Congress](#) that would include AGM-84H/K SLAM-ER long-range strike missiles, which are modified versions of the Harpoon, and MQ-8B Reaper surveillance and combat drones.

China's air and sea patrols around the island have increased as well. Over the weekend, [a total of 37 People's Liberation Army Air Force planes](#) crossed the median line in the Taiwan Strait, a sort of informal delineation that Taipei regards as defining the edge of its airspace. The incidents took place during an [unprecedented visit by the highest-ranking US official](#) to set foot on the island since Washington switched its recognition of the Chinese government from Taipei to Beijing.

After the incident, [Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense said it had the right](#) to "self-defense and to counterattack," even though the Chinese aircraft did not violate Taiwan's territorial integrity.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin utterly dismissed Taipei's complaints, telling reporters on Monday that "Taiwan is an inseparable part of Chinese territory. The so-called mid-line of the Strait does not exist."

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Dow Slides 525 Points Amid Tech Sell-Offs, Fears of Mounting COVID-19 Cases
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

US stocks slid again on Wednesday amid continued fears of a growing wave of COVID-19 infections worldwide as well as poor performance by tech stocks.

US stocks fell dramatically on Wednesday, with the Dow Jones closing 525.05 points lower, closing at 26,763.13. The Nasdaq lost 330.65 points to close at 10,632.99, and the S&P 500 suffered a loss of 78.65 points, closing at 3,236.92.

Driving the losses was electric car maker Tesla, which lost 9.2% of their value after owner Elon Musk made new promises about higher production levels for 2020 as well as a cheaper battery he hopes to begin making. News also broke on Wednesday that [Tesla was suing US Trade](#)

[Representative Robert Lighthizer](#) over several tariffs on trade with China, seeking to be repaid the costs of higher import costs for several parts of its cars, with interest.

Other stocks that lost substantial value on Wednesday were Amazon, which declined by 4.1%, Alphabet by 3.5%, Microsoft by 3.1%, and Apple by 4.2%.

[According to CNBC, the possibility of new](#) pandemic-related lockdowns in the United Kingdom [still hangs heavy over US stock trading](#). UK Prime Minister [Boris Johnson warned the country had reached a "perilous turning point."](#) announcing new lockdown restrictions for the next six months on Wednesday. The measures include new requirements for wearing face masks, higher fines for not wearing masks or gathering in groups of more than six, and restricted hours for pubs, bars and restaurants, among others.

[British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab also warned](#) on Wednesday that a second full-scale lockdown cannot be ruled out, either. The government's chief medical advisers have warned that without substantial action, the UK could reach a situation [by mid-October when there are 50,000 new COVID-19 cases](#) per day.

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Photos: Iranian Drone Makes Close Pass Over US Navy's Nimitz Aircraft Carrier in Persian Gulf by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has released several close-up photos of the US Navy's aircraft carrier USS Nimitz and ships from its strike group, which entered the Persian Gulf last week.

According to Iran's Tasnim News Agency, which published the IRGC's photos on Wednesday, the overflight occurred before the Nimitz transited the Strait of Hormuz. [According to the US Navy](#), the 100,000-ton warship, along with two guided-missile cruisers and a guided-missile destroyer, passed through the waterway and entered the Persian Gulf on September 18.

The photos show zoomed-in images of the Nimitz's flight deck, which is replete with F/A-18 Hornets, as well as at least one E-2 Hawkeye airborne early warning aircraft and one SH-60 Seahawk helicopter, which can be used for anything from submarine hunting to search and rescue operations. The USS Nimitz is the Navy's oldest carrier still in service, having been commissioned in 1975 as the first of the Nimitz-class ships.

[According to Tasnim, IRGC Navy Commander](#) Rear Admiral Ali Reza Tangsiri said the force detected the Nimitz's strike group using domestically-produced Mohajer-6 drones. He made the remarks [at a ceremony inducting 188 of the small, new](#), fixed-wing unmanned aerial vehicles into IRGC service.

[When Military Times asked the Navy about the incident](#), Cmdr. Rebecca Rebarich, a spokeswoman for US Naval Forces Central Command, told the publication, "There have been no unsafe or unprofessional interactions with the Iranians since April 15."

That was the day that [nearly a dozen IRGC speedboats zipped in close circles](#) around several US warships at the northern end of the Persian Gulf, with video and photos of the incident

published by the IRGC afterward. US President [Donald Trump then ordered US warships](#) to “shoot down and destroy any and all Iranian gunboats if they harass our ships at sea.” Tehran goes to great lengths to make US warships feel unwelcome in the Persian Gulf, including not only speedboat harassment, but also drone flybys like those published on Wednesday. In [January 2016](#), [August 2017](#) and [April 2019](#), Iranian drones were either spotted flying close to US aircraft carriers or filmed footage of them doing so and then had it published. The IRGC has even gone so far as to [build a mockup of the USS Nimitz](#), which it periodically uses for target practice.

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US Drugmaker Launches Final COVID-19 Vaccine Trial With 60,000 People

US pharmaceutical company Johnson & Johnson launched the final stage of clinical trials for its COVID-19 vaccine this week.

In a [Wednesday news release](#), the company confirmed its launch of the Phase 3 trial for its COVID-19 vaccine, known as JNJ-78436735, which is being developed by the Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson. The final trial comes after the company’s Phase 1/2a clinical trial indicated the vaccine was safe and effective enough to warrant further development. This final trial will involve 60,000 volunteers across three continents and will test a single vaccine dose versus a placebo in preventing COVID-19. According to its news release, the company is also scaling up its manufacturing capacity, hoping to be able to produce 1 billion doses of the vaccine annually. The release also notes that the company is committed to providing an affordable vaccine to the public on a not-for-profit basis and hopes that the first batches of the drug will be available for emergency use authorization in early 2021, if the Phase 3 clinical trial shows it to be safe and effective. “As COVID-19 continues to impact the daily lives of people around the world, our goal remains the same – leveraging the global reach and scientific innovation of our company to help bring an end to this pandemic,” said Johnson & Johnson Chairman and CEO Alex Gorsky.

“As the world’s largest healthcare company, we are bringing to bear our best scientific minds, and rigorous standards of safety, in collaboration with regulators, to accelerate the fight against this pandemic. This pivotal milestone demonstrates our focused efforts toward a COVID-19 vaccine that are built on collaboration and deep commitment to a robust scientific process. We are committed to clinical trial transparency and to sharing information related to our study, including details of our study protocol,” Gorsky added.

In a [statement this week](#), director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Dr. Anthony Fauci confirmed that there are currently four COVID-19 vaccine candidates undergoing Phase 3 clinical testing in the US, which are being developed by Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, Pfizer and AstraZeneca.

“It is likely that multiple COVID-19 vaccine regimens will be required to meet the global need. The Janssen candidate has showed promise in early-stage testing and may be especially useful in controlling the pandemic if shown to be protective after a single dose,” Fauci said.

This latest development comes after US President Donald Trump [said last week](#) that the US could have a safe and effective vaccine as soon as October and enough doses to vaccinate every American by April.

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US Judge Orders Eric Trump to Testify in Fraud Probe Involving Family Organization Before Election

Eric Trump, the third child of US President Donald Trump, must testify no later than October 7 as part of a probe into the Trump Organization, Judge Arthur Engoron ruled Wednesday following a New York Supreme Court hearing in Manhattan.

Eric Trump, who serves as a top executive in the Trump Organization, must testify in response to a subpoena from the New York attorney general's office as part of an investigation into whether the Trump Organization inflated the values of real estate assets on financial statements in order to receive loans and tax benefits.

The probe is being conducted by Attorney General of New York Letitia James.

Lawyers for James' office on Wednesday argued that Eric Trump should not be allowed to delay a subpoena for his testimony after his lawyers said he would only testify after the US presidential election to avoid his deposition being used "for political purposes."

"We simply can't delay compliance for another two months," attorney Matthew Colangelo said, [CNBC reported](#).

"Mr. [Eric] Trump is asking for a further two-month delay ... to the middle of November in response to a subpoena that was served in May and where the parties agreed in early June on a date for his attendance," Colangelo added.

During the Wednesday hearing, Eric Trump's lawyer Alan Futerfas said his legal team was "happy for him to sit down and be deposed" but that more time was necessary to review the documents pertaining to the civil probe, [the Independent reported](#).

"As the world knows, there's an election going on in about four weeks in this country, maybe five weeks. Eric Trump is a vital and integral part of that, and he's traveling just about seven days a week," Futerfas argued.

In July, Eric Trump canceled an interview with the New York attorney general's office, and one month later, the Trump Organization told the office it would not comply with subpoenas connected to the investigation.

James launched an investigation last year after the president's former personal lawyer Michael Cohen testified that the president's annual financial statements inflated the values of assets to get loans and insurance coverage.

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Over 40 Razor Blades Found at Parks, Playground Equipment in US City

Authorities in Eaton Rapids, Michigan, temporarily closed all public parks in the city on Tuesday after finding 41 razor blades at two parks in the city.

According to a [Tuesday Facebook post](#) by the Eaton Rapids Police Department, officers were dispatched to playgrounds in the area on Monday after a group of people at a playground reported to police that they had found several razor blades on and around the park equipment. Some of the blades seemed to have been intentionally placed to cause harm, the department added. Additional blades were found lying in the grass at another park.

"The citizens recovered approximately thirty-nine blades prior to [the] officer's arrival. The officers and city staff recovered an additional two. The witnesses report seeing four persons of interest that had been on the equipment," the post added.

The four persons of interest have been described as two males and two females who are either 17 or 18 years old.

"One female had blond hair and one male had brown hair. They were last seen walking north away from the playground," the police department stated in the release.

The city temporarily closed all public parks as officials investigated the situation but later on Tuesday announced that the parks have been reopened.

"We are happy to announce that all parks have been canvased [sic] and we are confident that any hazardous objects have been removed from the parks. We are able to open the parks at this time. Many thanks to the generosity of the community members that came forward to assist with loaning equipment and offering other resources to aide [sic] in these efforts. We appreciate you and your dedication to this great community," the city government said in a [post shared by the police department](#).

The City of Eaton Rapids is also offering a \$1,000 reward for any information that could potentially lead to the arrest or conviction of any suspects.

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Photo: At Least 380 Whales Dead in Mass Stranding on Tasmanian Sandbars

At least 380 whales have died in a mass stranding in a remote bay on the Australian island of Tasmania, officials confirmed Wednesday, in what has become the largest mass strandings ever recorded on the island.

According to a [report by AFP](#), rescuers have saved some 50 whales out of a pod of around 460.

"We have got a more accurate count and we can confirm that 380 whales are dead," said Nic Deka, a manager with Tasmania's Parks and Wildlife Service, AFP reported.

"There's around 30 left still alive, but the good news is that we have saved 50," he added.

Officials first realized the pilot whales were stranded on sandbars inside the harbor on Monday, with a mass rescue effort taking place the following day.

A rescue crew consisting of 60 conservationists, local fish farm workers and volunteers has spent the last few days using boats with special slings to help free and guide the mammals back into the ocean.

Currently, the rescuers are focused on freeing as many of the remaining 30 live whales as they can.

"They're focused on the job - it's demanding work, some of them are up to their chest in cold water so we're trying to rotate the crews," Dekka said.

"It's very draining physically. It's also draining emotionally," he added.

The whales have also been found stranded up to 6 miles apart, prompting officials to broaden their search area to determine if there are any more whales stuck nearby. In addition, some of the whales rescued Tuesday became stranded once again overnight, in accordance with what some whale behavior experts predicted, AFP noted.

"The good news is the majority of whales that were rescued are still out in deep water and swimming," Dekka told reporters. "They haven't stranded. So we've been more successful than not."

Although experts are unsure why mass strandings take place, some researchers believe the phenomena occur after pilot whales feed close to the shoreline or after following one or two whales that stray from the pod.

"We do step in and respond in these situations, but as far as being able to prevent these occurring in the future, there's really little that we can do," Tasmanian environment department marine biologist Kris Carlyon told AFP, referring to stranding as a "natural event."

Officials will also have to dispose of the whale carcasses. Assessors will be developing a clean-up plan on Wednesday.

"As time goes on [the whales] do become more fatigued, so their chances of survival reduces," Dekka noted.

"But we'll keep working as long as there's live animals at the site," he added.

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Arctic Sea Ice 'Headed in the Wrong Direction' With Second-Lowest Levels on Record - Scientist

Researchers at the US National Snow and Ice Data Center revealed on Monday that Arctic sea ice reached its annual minimum extent on September 15, with the second-lowest area on record, a development that threatens human habitation and food security, an expert told Sputnik.

Sea ice extent is the total area in which ice concentration is at least 15%, [according to NASA](#). Analysis of satellite data shows that the Arctic ice cap's extent has shrunk to an area of 1.44 million square miles this year, the second-lowest minimum on record. Sea ice volume, on the other hand, is calculated as thickness multiplied by concentration and area.

"The fact that volume is also declining, and declining rapidly even relative to extent, suggests that we are headed in the wrong direction and have been for quite some time. Looks like this is

just about the worst news you could possibly bring to people on the radio,” Guy McPherson, scientist and professor emeritus of natural resources and ecology at the University of Arizona, told [Radio Sputnik's Political Misfits](#) hosts Michelle Witte and Bob Schlehuber.

“Volume is down three-quarters since the mid-1980s. So shortly after measurements began - satellite measurements, in 1979 - the volume was what we would consider to be ‘normal.’ And here we are a mere 3-3.5 decades later, and the volume is down by three-quarters, and the thickness of sea ice is down by 99%. Whereas there used to be a tremendous amount of ice that was more than 4 meters thick, now, almost all of the ice is less than a meter thick ... These are hugely important numbers that we do not hear enough about,” McPherson added.

In a journal article titled [“Extremes become routine in an emerging new Arctic”](#) recently published in the journal Nature Climate Change, researchers warn that the rapidly warming Arctic is undergoing “tremendous changes in sea ice, ocean and terrestrial regions.”

McPherson noted that in their work, the researchers “point toward the Arctic transitioning from one dominated by ice to one dominated by rain and open water on the sea circuit. We are already losing habitat for humans around the globe, especially in tropical and subtropical regions.” He added that changes in the Arctic could also threaten food security due to reduction in water availability and extreme weather event disasters.

“Grain crops for the basis for every civilization going back thousands of years, including this one. We absolutely need a soybean harvest and a corn harvest, a maize harvest this year, this fall, that matches or exceeds previous harvests. I haven’t seen any indication that that’s going to happen.” McPherson noted.

“That’s hugely important, because that’s how every civilization in the past and this one have gotten through and are going to get through the so-called hard times. It’s the ability to store certain foods in dry storage where you don’t need special, extreme conditions that allow us to get through,” he added.

Despite the dire effects of climate change, US President Donald Trump has tapped Ryan Maue, a meteorologist who has questioned the connection between extreme weather and climate change, to be the new chief scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, [Democracy Now reported Tuesday](#).

“To put a climate denier in charge of such an important body at this time in history, that’s obviously insane,” McPherson noted.

“Distraction and denial are more important than actual facts. And this is not the first time the Trump administration has revealed itself as being uninterested in facts, uninterested in scientific evidence, and so it shouldn’t come as a big surprise. And yet this administration continues to surprise,” McPherson added.

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Netherlands Claims Thunderstorms Blocked F-35s From Escorting US B-52s During August Operation

by [Evan Craighead](#)

Amsterdam claims the Royal Netherlands Air Force (RNLAf) was unable to participate in the US' NATO-inclusive Operation Allied Sky because its US-made F-35 Lightning II aircraft had vulnerable fuel tanks due to pipe damage of unexplained origins, making them unsafe to fly in thunderstorms.

"Damaged pipes have been found on F-35A fighters. These are pipes from the On-Board Inert Gas Generation System (OBIGGS) in a fuel tank," read a [Friday release](#) issued by the Dutch Ministry of Defense.

"All countries with F-35As were advised to avoid flights near storm cells and to protect the aircraft on the ground by a shelter or lightning rod. This is stated in the 21st annual progress report VF-35 published this week."

This explanation was provided weeks after the RNLAf announced it would not be taking part in what the [US military described](#) as a "display of commitment to European security and solidarity."

"Due to weather conditions, our participation in Operation Allied Sky is canceled," a translated tweet from the service read.

[Sputnik reported](#) late last month that the US-led operation was set to include all 30 NATO member states in a single day to "[demonstrate NATO solidarity](#), enhance readiness and provide training opportunities aimed at enhancing interoperability for all participating aircrews."

"The OBIGGS ensures that the risk of explosion of fuel vapors in the event of, for example, a lightning strike is reduced to a minimum. The damaged pipes can make the fuel tanks less well protected," the Dutch Ministry of Defense highlighted in its Friday release.

"After damaged pipes were found on 4 (non-Dutch) appliances, further inspections followed. More damaged pipes were found, including at Dutch F-35As. The cause of the problem is still under investigation."

[The Aviationist's David Cenciotti reported](#) that Dutch Ministry of Defense spokesperson Sidney Plankman spoke with [Dutch outlet Algemeen Dagblad](#) and confirmed that while the RNLAf intended to escort B-52s during Operation Allied Sky, "there was a great risk of lightnings that day. Therefore we have decided not to do it."

According to the Cenciotti, [issues with the OBIGGS](#) were first identified in 2009 and have persisted for over a decade. While a grounded F-35 Lightning II can be [protected by lightning rods](#), "it looks like there is no other way to safeguard the precious aircraft than keeping it away from thunderstorms when it is airborne," he wrote.

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Graphic Video: Twitter Divided Over Cheeky Voter Turnout Ad Featuring Exotic Dancers
by [Evan Craighead](#)

A select group of exotic dancers and a crowdfunded campaign to get out the vote called “Get Your Booty to the Poll” have not only piqued the interest of potential voters, but also triggered online debates regarding the Black vote and active racism in American politics.

The dancers, [according to the campaign’s website](#), are named Coy, Bunni, Imani, Jordan, Jenny, Nikki and Zippora. The minute-long video shows the women trading off between performance and speaking roles as they entertain the viewer and educate them on why they should vote in the upcoming election.

Be advised, the footage below contains scenes some audiences may find offensive.

Lisa France, senior writer for CNN’s entertainment team, applauded the campaign on Wednesday, [tweeting](#), “Atlanta strippers have pulled off the best voting ad campaign I have seen yet.”

“Matter of Fact” host Soledad O’Brien, along with a slew of other netizens, also noted the effectiveness of the campaign.

However, a number of Black individuals expressed disappointment with the video, such as Tariq Nasheed, who claimed that the video was a product of [“white Democrats.”](#) His mention of the Democratic Party made others express their own frustrations with the current two-party system and how it chooses to reach out to the Black community.

However, Angela Barnes, the writer and director of the campaign video, set the record straight via Twitter.

“I am the writer/director & I am a BLACK WOMAN. I was NOT paid for this & used MY OWN MONEY & money raised from a GoFundMe to pay for it,” she said on social media. “Black people, especially Black men are ignored by our govt & I want them to know they need to start paying attention.”

[The GoFundMe campaign](#) that financed the video, entitled “Angela and Paul want Black people to vote,” was created on July 13 by Angela Gomes and Paul Fox. “Angela Barnes” and “Angela Gomes” are the same individual.

The voter turnout campaign also cleared up some misinformation about Democrats’ affiliation with “Get Your Booty to the Poll.”

Gomes [also clarified](#) that Paul Fox is Black, not white, as one netizen alleged.

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‘Have to See What Happens’: Trump Dodges Commitment to Peaceful Transfer if He Loses US Election

by [Evan Craighead](#)

US President Donald Trump told reporters on Wednesday that, in the event that he loses the 2020 presidential election, he could not guarantee a peaceful transfer of power to Democratic nominee and former Vice President Joe Biden.

"We're going to have to see what happens," he told reporters during his Wednesday news conference, noting that mail-in "ballots are a disaster."

"Get rid of the ballots and you'll have a very- we'll have a very peaceful- there won't be a transfer, frankly," Trump argued.

"It'll be a continuation. The ballots are out of control."

Trump [abruptly departed](#) from the Wednesday news conference and told members of the press that Director of the United States National Economic Council Larry Kudlow and Scott Atlas, White House adviser on the COVID-19 novel coronavirus, would answer the remaining questions as he as took an "emergency phone call."

However, at least one reporter claims to have gotten a different word on Trump's phone call.

Trump has [continuously argued](#) that the November election would be a "scam" or "rigged" due to mail-in voting, which many Americans are relying on due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"They're sending out tens of millions of ballots to everybody, people that didn't expect them.

People are getting inundated with ballots, they'll be showered with ballots," Trump [said on Friday](#).

"Mark my words: I think he is gonna try to kick back the election somehow, come up with some rationale why it can't be held," Biden [predicted in April](#).

However, Biden told Comedy Central's "The Daily Show" host Trevor Noah in June that he was confident that if Trump lost the election and refused to give in, military personnel would "escort him from the White House with great dispatch," [CBS News reported](#).

"This is the guy who said that all mail-in ballots are fraudulent, voting by mail, while he sits behind the desk in the Oval Office and writes his mail-in ballot to vote in a primary," he told Noah.

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Washington, DC, Protesters Demand Justice for Breonna Taylor in Wake of Grand Jury Decision

by [Evan Craighead](#)

Renewed Black Lives Matter protests have broken out across the US in the wake of a Wednesday decision by a Kentucky grand jury not to indict for murder any of the officers involved in the shooting death of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman, on March 13. In Washington, DC, demonstrators gathered outside the US Department of Justice.

The Kentucky National Guard has been called into Louisville, where a 9 p.m. local time curfew has been scheduled amid nationwide protests triggered by the grand jury's decision regarding the Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) officers involved in Taylor's death.

Protesters gathered Wednesday evening at the DoJ building in downtown Washington, DC, and began marching and demanding justice for Taylor.

Taylor was killed when three plainclothes LMPD officers executed a no-knock search warrant at her apartment and her boyfriend engaged them, believing them to be intruders.

Of the three LMPD cops involved - Brett Hankinson, John Mattingly and Myles Cosgrove - Hankinson, charged with first-degree wanton endangerment, was the only officer indicted. The former detective was fired from the LMPD on June 23.

Activists online and in the streets have demanded that Hankinson, Mattingly and Cosgrove all be brought up on more serious felony charges in connection with Taylor's death.

Federal Bureau of Investigation ballistics analysis revealed that of the 20 shots fired by officers, the bullet that killed Taylor was fired by Cosgrove.

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US Man Ordered to Register as Sex Offender After Putting Semen in Coworker's Food, Water Bottle

by [Evan Craighead](#)

A California man has been convicted of assault and battery for sexual purposes after prosecutors claimed that he became obsessed with a female co-worker and planted his semen in her water bottle and food jar and smeared the substance on her computer.

Orange County Superior Court Judge Kathleen Roberts ruled on Monday that 30-year-old Palmdale, California, resident Stevens Millanastro was guilty of numerous counts of misdemeanor assault and battery toward a coworker, [the Orange County Register reported](#). Roberts also concluded that Millanastro committed said crimes for sexual purposes and must now register as a sex offender.

Michael Morrison, Millanastro's attorney, reportedly argued in court that his client was not attempting to receive sexual gratification from his "highly inappropriate behavior," which happened in La Palma, California, in November 2016 and January 2017.

The acts, which Morrison did not deny took place, were carried out as payback for the woman filing a formal complaint against Millanastro, the attorney claimed, saying his client feared losing his job or a promotion.

However, Orange County Deputy District Attorney Laila Nikaien claimed that Millanastro began to get obsessive over the female co-worker and would incessantly stare at her in the office after she turned down his request for a date.

She first told her boss, but later filed a human resources complaint after Millanastro's behavior persisted.

It was then that she began to repeatedly find a cloudy substance in her water bottle. After receiving approval to record her desk, the woman returned one day to find a "milky white substance" on her keyboard.

Nikaen noted that both the employee's boss and police looked over the surveillance footage.

The latter determined that it was Millanastro who had waited until the woman left her desk to smear the contents of a tissue over her keyboard and mouse.

Millanastro, scheduled for sentencing on October 6, faces up to 30 months behind bars.

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Aussie Man Finds Pair of Warring Snakes in Backyard - Video Club

John Benedetti, who lives in Australia's Queensland, was recently minding his own business when he came upon a pair of snakes tussling in his backyard - again.

Shockingly, this isn't exactly a first for the Aussie homeowner, who [told video licensor Storyful](#) that the two pythons actually live in a mango tree in his backyard and have been at each other "for a couple of weeks."

"It's happened multiple times," Benedetti said. "They usually fall out of the tree onto my shed and work their way to the ground."

"After they fight, one usually heads straight back up the tree, whilst the other waits until the first snake is far enough up the tree, [then] the losing snake is able to climb the tree again without being hassled."

Persistence is key, it seems. It's anyone's guess which slithery warrior will win the next round.